NATION

Banke temple gets FCRA permit

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BUSINESS

FII outflows continue: ₹ 19,759 crore sold in a week

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SPORTS

K'taka crush Punjab by inning and 207 Runs

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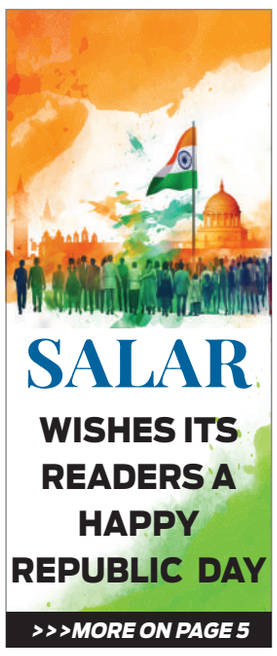

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South B'luru, Whitefield to face water crisis: BWSSB

Residents urged to reduce water use, prefer Cauvery supply

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

The chairman of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Ram Prasath Manohar, warned on Saturday that regions such as South-East Bengaluru, Whitefield, and the outer city limits, which heavily rely on groundwater, are expected to experience significant water stress this summer.

A recent scientific study conducted by BWSSB, in partnership with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), identified 80 wards in the city, including 110 villages, as being particularly vulnerable to water shortages due to high groundwater dependence. Manohar urged residents in these high-risk areas to minimise their reliance on groundwater and transition to connections from the Cauvery water supply. He noted that the Cauvery Phase 5 Project has enhanced water availability, presenting a sustainable solution to meet Bengaluru's increasing water demands.

Central Bengaluru may see groundwater levels drop by 5m **PHOTO: PTI**

"This study represents a major milestone in our efforts to ensure sustainable water management in Bengaluru," Manohar stated. The research indicates a declining groundwater level across various parts of the city, primarily reliant on borewells, which extract around 800 million litres of water daily. Central Bengaluru may see groundwater levels drop by 5m, while areas under CMC could experience declines between 10m and 15m. In the 110 villages, the projected decline is estimated to be between 20m and 25m. *—PTI*

A WIN FOR INDIA

US SC clears 26/11 convict Rana's extradition

WASHINGTON, 25 JAN

The US Supreme Court has turned down a review petition by terror accused Tahawwur Rana, dismissing his last legal challenge against his extradition to India in the 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed 166 people.

The apex court's order came on 21 January, a day after Donald Trump was sworn in as the US President.

Earlier, Rana lost legal battles in federal courts, including the US Court of Appeals for the North Circuit in San Francisco.

Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, on 13 November filed a "petition for a writ of certiorari" before the US Supreme Court to review the lower court's ruling.

Rana, who is currently detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles, is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

Headley obtained Rana's consent to open an office of First World Immigration Services as a cover for his activities in India.

Earlier, the US government had argued in the court that the petition for a writ of certiorari should be denied. A total of 166 people, including six Americans, were killed in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 10 Pakistani terrorists laid a more than 60-hour siege, attacking people at iconic and vital locations of Mumbai.

ISI role to be uncovered

The extradition of Rana could give more information about the involvement of Pakistan's security apparatus in the incident, said public prosecutor in Mumbai case advocate Ujjwal Nikam on Saturday. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: PTI

TIMELINE

26 Nov, 2008
166 killed as 10 Pak terrorists attack iconic places such as Taj Hotel in Mumbai

18 Oct, 2009
Tahawwur Rana and Pak LeT terrorist and 26/11 mastermind David Coleman Headley arrested in US

10 June, 2011
US Court held Rana not guilty in the Mumbai attacks; he was convicted for helping LeT

17 Jan, 2013
Court gives 168 months prison to Rana

10 June, 2020
Court signs arrest warrant to extradite him to India

16 May, 2023
Rana opposes extradition, faced rejection

15 Aug, 2024
US court says India can extradite Rana

13 Nov, 2024
Rana files plea in US SC. It was his last attempt against extradition

Prez Murmu bats for 'One Nation One Election'

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday advocated for the "One Nation One Election" initiative, asserting it has the potential to redefine "good governance" in the country by promoting consistency in governance, preventing policy paralysis, mitigating resource diversion, and alleviating financial burdens on the state. In her address to the nation ahead of the 76th Republic Day, she emphasised the government's ongoing efforts to "eliminate remnants of a colonial mindset that have lingered in the country for decades". *— PTI*

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Sri Lanka revokes Adani wind power pricing agreement

COLOMBO, 25 JAN

The Sri Lankan government on Saturday said it has revoked the pricing agreement for Adani Group's wind power projects in the island nation and appointed a committee to review them. Government spokesperson Nalinda Jayathissa clarified that while the Adani Green Energy wind power projects in Mannar and Pooneryn districts have not been cancelled, the government has rejected the power purchase prices negotiated by the previous administration in 2023. *—PTI*

HC adjourns hearing on MUDA case to 22 March

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

High Court on Saturday deferred the hearing of appeals filed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and former Mysuru landowner J Devaraju in MUDA case to 22 March. The case pertains to allegations of irregularities in the allotment of 14 Mysuru Urban Development Authority housing sites to Siddaramaiah's wife. A division bench comprising Chief Justice NV Anjaria and Justice M I Arun adjourned the matter after Siddaramaiah's counsel requested time for senior Abhishek Manu Singhvi to appear on his behalf. Meanwhile, reports suggest that the Lokayukta may clear Siddaramaiah of any wrongdoing. *— PTI*

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US freezes funds to Ukraine, others

WASHINGTON, 25 JAN

In a significant policy shift, the State Department has suspended new funding for nearly all US foreign assistance programmes including Ukraine, with limited exceptions for humanitarian food aid and military support to Israel and Egypt.

This sweeping directive threatens to halt numerous global initiatives aimed at health, education, development, job training, and other efforts, as the United States stands as the world's largest provider of foreign aid.

The order, disseminated to US embassies worldwide and obtained by The Associated Press, prohibits new government expenditure, implying that projects can only operate as long as they have existing funds. Many leading aid organisations interpreted the directive as an immediate cessation of US-funded operations globally. A senior official, speaking anonymously, noted that many programmes are likely to stop work immediately to avoid accruing additional costs.

During this funding freeze, the State Department will review the viability of thousands of aid and development projects. This directive is a direct implementation of an executive order signed by President Donald Trump earlier in the week. Humanitarian officials were particularly disappointed that health clinics and other health initiatives were not granted exemptions from the funding freeze.

The order justifies the freeze by stating the need to ensure that appropriations are effective and align with President Trump's foreign policy objectives. In the coming month, standards for reviewing foreign assistance will be established, with a comprehensive report due in three months, to be presented to Secretary of State Marco Rubio for recommendations to the president. *—PTI*

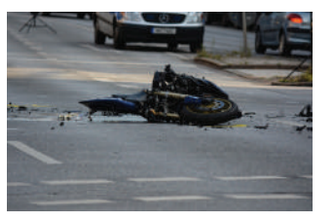
Techie killed as bike gets tangled in cable wire

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

A tragic accident occurred on Old Airport Road, claiming the life of a 23-year-old techie, Rohit R Patil, after he was run over by a BMTC bus. The incident unfolded around 6.30pm near the Passport Office compound on ITPL Road, close to Rameshwaram Cafe, when Rohit lost control of his scooter.

Unbeknownst to him, a cable wire lying on the road became ensnared in his scooter's wheels, causing him to lose balance and fall into the path of the oncoming bus, which was unable to stop in time.

HAL traffic police promptly arrived at the scene, conducted a thorough investigation, and transported Rohit's body to CV Raman Hospital for post-mortem examination. Following the necessary formalities, the body was returned to his family on Saturday. A case has been registered regarding the incident, and authorities are actively investigating the circumstances surrounding the presence of the cable wire on the road. *—Salar News*



'Live-in relations affect moral values'

PRAYAGRAJ, 25 JAN

The Allahabad High Court has called for a framework to address the growing trend of live-in relationships among youths, despite the lack of social acceptance for such arrangements. Justice Nalin Kumar Srivastava made this remark while granting bail to Akash Keshari from Varanasi, who faced charges under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the SC/ST Act for reportedly forming a physical relationship with a woman under the false pretext of marriage.

The case arose when the woman approached the Sarnath Police Station in Varanasi, alleging that Keshari refused to marry her. During the proceedings, the court remarked that although live-in relationships lack social sanction, their appeal among young people is rising, as individuals can evade responsibilities towards their partners.

"It is high time we all thought and tried to find out some framework and solution to save the moral values of society," the judge stated while considering Keshari's bail application.

Keshari's counsel argued that the case against him was baseless, asserting that the woman was of legal age and that their relationship was consensual. The defence also mentioned that the couple had been in a live-in arrangement for approximately six years and refuted claims regarding an alleged abortion, highlighting that Keshari never promised to marry the woman. *—PTI*

Woman ends life over microfinance loan in Bidar

BIDAR, 25 JAN

A 25-year-old woman, Reshma, took her life at her home in the border village of Goudagaon, under the jurisdiction of Hulasur police station. Reports indicate that her suicide was prompted by overwhelming microfinance loans. Reshma had accumulated debts of approximately Rs 4 lakh from seven to eight microfinance institutions, including Dharmasthala, Chaitanya, and Tata. She faced monthly repayments of around Rs 20,000 to Rs 22,000 with agents persistently visiting her home for payments. According to her maid, Vishal, Reshma hanged herself on 22 January when she was alone at home. *—Salar News*

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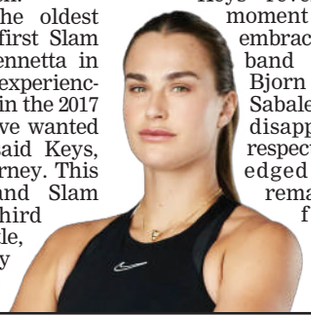
Aus Open: Keys beats Sabalenka to win 1st title

MELBOURNE, 25 JAN

Madison Keys triumphed at the Australian Open final on Saturday night, securing her first Grand Slam title with a 6-3, 2-6, 7-5 victory over No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka. As she entered Rod Laver Arena, Keys bypassed the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup, an omen of what was to come as she boldly clinched the silver trophy after a tense 2½-hour match.

At 29, Keys is the oldest woman to win her first Slam title since Flavia Pennetta in 2015 and did so after experiencing a lopsided defeat in the 2017 US Open final. "I have wanted this for so long," said Keys, reflecting on her journey. This was her 46th Grand Slam appearance, the third most before a first title, exceeded only by Pennetta and Marion Bartoli.

Keys faced a challenging path to victory, having defeated world No. 2 Iga Swiatek in the semifinals while saving a match point. In the final, she broke Sabalenka's serve three times in the first set, capitalising on the latter's errors. Despite a dip in her first-serve percentage in the second set, Keys rallied in the third for a thrilling finish. Post-match, Keys revelled in her moment of victory, embracing her husband and coach, Bjorn Fratangelo. Sabalenka, visibly disappointed yet respectful, acknowledged Keys' remarkable performance. *—PTI*



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UNSUNG HEROES

3 from State bag Padma Awards

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

On the eve of Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu announced the recipients of the prestigious Padma Awards, recognising individuals for their outstanding contributions in various fields. Among the 2025 Padma Shri awardees are three distinguished personalities from Karnataka: K Venkappa Ambaji Sugatekar, Bhimavva Doddabalappa Shillekyatara, and Dr Vijayalakshmi Deshmane.

K Venkappa Sugatekar, 81, from Bagalkot, has dedicated over six decades to preserving and promoting Karnataka's folk music. Known for his soulful Gondhali songs, Venkappa has amassed over 1,000 songs. His accolades include an honorary doctorate from the Karnataka Folklore University and the Rajyotsava Award.

Bhimavva Doddabalappa Shillekyatara, Dr Vijayalakshmi Deshmane and K Venkappa Ambaji Sugatekar **PHOTOS: SALAR**

Bhimavva Doddabalappa Shillekyatara, 96, is known as the "Grandmother of Gombeyata" for her mastery of Togalu Gombeyata, a traditional shadow puppetry. Having performed Ramayana and Mahabharata across 12 nations, she has dedicated over 70 years to innovating this art form. Dr Vijayalakshmi Deshmane, 70, an oncologist from Kalaburagi, has made big contributions to breast cancer treatment.

Other winners

Former men's hockey captain P R Sreejesh was chosen for the Padma Bhushan, while recently-retired cricket star Ravichandran Ashwin was among the Padma Shri winners Suzuki Motor's Osamu Suzuki, former CJI JS Khehar, legendary figure in Malayalam literature MT Vasudevan Nair and renowned singer Sharda Sinha were awarded the Padma Vibhushan. *—Salar News*

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India, Indonesia sign 5 pacts including security

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg on Saturday for talks aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation. The two nations signed five pacts in areas including health, traditional medicine, maritime security, culture, and digital space.

odi said that India and Indonesia are committed to maintaining peace and security in the region, with a focus on freedom of navigation in accordance with international laws. The statement came amidst China's growing influence in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific.

Subianto stated that Indonesia is eager to attract Indian investments. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Vizag-bound AI flight returns to City due to tech issues

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

An Air India Express flight traveling from Bengaluru to Visakhapatnam on Saturday returned to the airport here due to a technical issue, airport officials said. The flight, which took off at 10 am, circled over Bengaluru before returning to the airport from where it had originally departed. Airport officials clarified that there was no emergency landing and said, "The flight returned due to technical issues, but there was no emergency landing." However, there was no immediate response from the airlines. —*PTI*

Mysuru woman's head severed in road accident

MYSURU, 25 JAN

A tragic incident occurred on Saturday near Sindhuvalli in Nanjangud taluk when a KSRTC bus passenger, Shivalingamma, 43, was killed after her head and one hand severed while attempting to spit out of the window. The bus was overtaking another vehicle when it was brushed past by an overspeeding goods truck, causing the fatal injuries. Shivalingamma, a resident of Alahalli in Gundlupet taluk, died instantly. The driver of the goods truck fled the scene, prompting the Nanjangud Traffic Police to launch a manhunt for the absconding driver. Sub Inspector Siddaraju reported that the bus has been seized, and the deceased's body has been taken to KR Hospital mortuary in Mysuru. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Sheikh Tanveer Asif is new Mysuru City Commissioner

MYSURU, 25 JAN

IAS Officer Shaikh Tanveer Asif has been appointed as the new Commissioner of Mysuru City Corporation (MCC). A 2017-batch officer of the Karnataka cadre, Asif was previously serving as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Mandya Zilla Panchayat (ZP). The Government Secretariat issued a notification on 24 January, announcing the transfer of Asif and 11 other IAS officers. Ashaad-Ur-Rahman Shariff, the former MCC Commissioner, has been transferred and is awaiting a new posting. Asif, the son of retired police sub-inspector Sheikh Yousuf from Kalaburgi district, holds an engineering degree from MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology in Bengaluru. He ranked 25th in the 2016 Civil Services Examination and was honored by the Election Commission of India on National Voters Day last year. Following Asif's transfer, Mandya Deputy Commissioner Kumara assumed charge as the interim CEO. —*Salar News*

Bidar rape convict sentenced to life in POCSO case

BIDAR, 25 JAN

A 28-year-old man, Rafiq Ismailsaab Patel, from Bidar has been sentenced to life imprisonment and a fine of Rs 50,000 by the Additional District and Sessions Court. The court ruled that the District Legal Services Authority should provide Rs 50,000 in compensation to the victim, a disabled girl who was subjected to a horrific ordeal. The case was brought under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, following a complaint by the girl's mother. Special Government Prosecutor Santoshkumar T Siddeshwar led the prosecution case. —*Salar News*

Court accepts closure report in bribery case against CM

The case stems from claims of Rs 1.3 cr bribe taken by CM

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

A special court to try criminal cases against against elected representatives has accepted the closure report filed by the Karnataka Lokayukta police in a bribery case involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The case was based on allegations made by a BJP leader, who accused Siddaramaiah of receiving Rs 1.3 crore during his previous tenure as CM in exchange for appointing a steward at the Bengaluru Turf Club (BTC).

In its ruling on 18 January, the court stated, "The closure report filed by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Karnataka Lokayukta, Bengaluru, dated 12.9.2024, is hereby accepted."

The court further observed that while records indicated that "Accused No.1 Mr. Siddaramaiah had received a sum of Rs 1,30,00,000 from Accused No.2 L Vivekananda, the same cannot be held to be an act of quid pro quo towards his nomination as Steward of BTC."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah PHOTO: PTI

Previously, the special court had instructed the Lokayukta police to reopen and investigate the case.

However, following the inquiry, the Lokayukta police filed a closure report, which has now been accepted by the court.

According to sources, the report was initially set to be submitted a day before the hearing. However, since 25 January was a fourth Saturday and a court holiday, the Lokayukta police advanced the submission to 24 January.

Officials from the Mysuru Lokayukta remained tight-lipped about the contents of the report and refused to disclose any details.

The case stems from an FIR registered against Siddaramaiah and others on 27 September, 2024.

Following a complaint by RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna, the special court in Bengaluru had directed the jurisdictional Lokayukta police in Mysuru on 25 September to conduct an investigation. —*PTI*

AMID PUBLIC OUTRAGE

CM vows to amend microfinance laws

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

- The outstanding amount is Rs 59,367.76 crore. The number of outstanding accounts is Rs 1,09,88,332, which is 15 per cent of the state. There are only 31 institutions operating

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said the State government would amend the existing laws related to the money lending business and introduce new legislation to protect the interest of genuine borrowers.

In the wake of public outrage against the alleged harassment by microfinance companies to recover money from borrowers, Siddaramaiah chaired an emergency meeting with his deputy DK Shivakumar, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, Home Minister G Parameshwara, Law Minister HK Patil, senior government and top police officials.

Representatives of the microfinance companies association, regional officers of the Reserve Bank of India and NABARD officials were also present.

Later, briefing reporters, the CM said he took the opinion of the microfinance companies as well as the RBI officials.

While recovering money, RBI guidelines should be followed by microfinance institutions. The central bank should also monitor the violations of these guidelines, he added.

The CM also announced setting up a helpline number in each district where people can lodge their complaints.

The outstanding amount is Rs 59,367.76 crore. The number of outstanding accounts is Rs 1,09,88,332, which is 15 per cent of the state. There are 31 microfinance institutions operating, which have employed 37,967. —*PTI*

Special teams set to track killers of B'deshi woman

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

The City police have intensified their efforts to apprehend the suspects responsible for the sexual assault and murder of a Bangladeshi woman in the City. Three special teams have been formed to expedite the investigation.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) D Devaraj, two teams have been dispatched to West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, while the third team is conducting operations within the City.

CCTV footage from the vicinity of the crime scene has been collected and analysed. Based on the visuals, several individuals have been summoned for questioning.

However, no substantial leads have emerged as yet. Police are also relying on information provided by the victim's husband, Suman, and brother during interrogation to aid their search.

The victim, a Bangladeshi national, was employed as a domestic worker in a flat in Ramamurthy Nagar. She was last seen leaving from her work on the evening of Thursday. Her failure to return home prompted her husband, Suman, to lodge a complaint at the Ramamurthy Nagar Police Station later that evening.

Items recovered from the crime scene have been sent for forensic analysis, including fingerprint examination.

Body has since been handed over to her family after the post-mortem. —*Salar News*

State launches Panchayat Raj Fellowship project

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge announced the implementation of the "Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Raj Fellowship" programme, aimed at enhancing local governance in the backward region of Kalyana Karnataka. In a statement on social media platform X, Kharge noted that this initiative is the first of its kind in India and was introduced in the previous budget.

The fellowship offers an exciting opportunity for graduates interested in social sector, . According to Kharge, fellows are expected to grasp administrative contexts of Kalyana Karnataka, while collaborating with district administration. —*PTI*

PROTEST AGAINST UBER, OLA

Indian Vehicle Drivers Trade Union members protested at Freedom Park, Bengaluru, on Saturday, demanding a ban on online platforms like Rapido, Uber, Ola, and Porter. They accused the transport department of favouring these organisations and called for immediate action PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Royal family vows to fight for Palace Grounds

PHOTO: X

MYSURU, 25 JAN

Pramodadevi Wadiyar, a member of the Mysuru royal family, announced on Saturday that her family is determined to continue their legal battle against the state government's decision to take over the Bangalore Palace grounds for road widening. Speaking to reporters, she stated that the family is also contesting the compensation of Rs 3,014 crore in Transferable Development Rights (TDR) for the appropriation of 15 acres of land.

Wadiyar asserted that the Bangalore Palace grounds belong to the five sisters of Srijkantadutta Narasimharaja Wadiyar, and highlighted a Supreme Court ruling in their favour in 2014, which established their claim. She emphasised the importance of the court's stay on the acquisition of the land and reiterated that the state government must maintain the status quo.

Meanwhile, BJP MLC H Vishwanath condemned the government's ordinance, urging Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to engage in dialogue with the royal family to resolve the dispute. He alleged that issues surrounding the royal family's property tend to escalate whenever Siddaramaiah assumes power. —*Salar News*

ON R-DAY CELEBRATIONS

21 Karnataka police officers to receive President's medal

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

In honour of Republic Day 2025, the Government of India has announced medals for 21 police officers from Karnataka, recognising their exceptional service and dedication. The officers were selected based on their overall performance, achievements, and reputation at an all-India level.

Among the awardees are Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP), Basavaraju Sharanappa Jille, and Commandant of the 12th Battalion of KSRP, Hamja Hussain, who will receive the President's Medal for Distinguished Services.

Additionally, Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) Renuka K Sukumar and Additional Inspector General of Police (AIGP) Dr Sanjeev M Patil will be honored with the Meritorious Service Medal for their outstanding contributions to the police force.

PHOTO: PTI

The list also includes various Inspectors, Commandants, and head constables from across different departments, all recognised for their role in maintaining law and order, enhancing public safety, and ensuring the well-being of citizens in the State.

The awards will be presented, as part of the national celebrations, to honour their distinguished service and boost the morale of the Karnataka police force. —*Salar News*

'Vijayendra failed to win over dissident groups'

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

Senior BJP leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister DV Sadananda Gowda on Saturday said state president BY Vijayendra had failed to take the dissident groups into confidence.

He also insisted upon a "transparent" election process to appoint the next president of the state who would replace the "ad hoc" president.

In the wake of growing dissidence, Gowda stressed a need for an overhaul in the saffron party.

"We must speak our heart out irrespective of whether people like it or not. The party should benefit from it," the former union minister said in a press conference.

Changing the core committee members is not a solution because that will not ensure the membership of good people, Gowda opined.

Gowda's statement dealt yet another blow to Vijayendra who is already under attack by the Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and his faction. —*PTI*

'LEARN KANNADA'

'B'luru closed for North India' post sparks debate online

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

A social media post stating that 'Bengaluru is closed for North India' has gone viral, generating debate about the Kannada language row online.

In a post on 'X', a social media user stated: 'Bengaluru is closed for North India and neighbouring states who don't want to learn Kannada. They don't need Bengaluru if they can't respect the language and culture.'

The recent post by Babruvahana (@Paarmatma) has garnered significant attention, with over 115,000 views, 198 reposts, and 1,839 likes. (at the time this was written)

Reacting to the post, a social media user who claimed to be a 'migrant to Bengaluru' said the post might sound a bit harsh.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

"But whenever I see people in Bengaluru completely disregard Kannada as some sort of tribal language and even look down on those who speak Kannada as illiterates, even in corporate offices, I feel very pained. Kannada is a phenomenally rich language that has received the most literary awards, including Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith awards (sic)," he said.

He suggested it was time for Kannadigas to create a movement for Kannada pride in a positive way rather than resorting to a negative backlash.

Another user, while agreeing to learn Kannada, demanded that the State government hire good teachers to teach Kannada in offices. —*PTI*

CAMPCO raises alarm over areca nut imports

MANGALURU, 25 JAN

The Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (CAMPCO), based in Mangaluru, has voiced serious concerns regarding the challenges faced by domestic arecanut growers due to the importation of roasted arecanut into India.

In a letter addressed to Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal, CAMPCO detailed the issues arising from the classification of imported roasted arecanut under HSN code 20081920 as a value-added product, which allegedly allows for the evasion of customs duties through misclassification. This practice, according to CAMPCO, distorts the market equilibrium, thereby denying growers fair prices. —*PTI*

Man dies after drug trial; brother blames company

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

A 33-year-old man, who had been involved in a clinical trial conducted by a R and D company, was found dead at his brother's home in Jalahalli, said police.

According to police, victim Nagesh Veeranna's brother registered a complaint on 22 January.

Revana Siddappa said Veeranna's death was a result of the side effects from the medicines administered during the trial.

According to Siddappa, Veeranna had no prior health issues before participating in the trial.

As per the police report, in December 2024, Veeranna was admitted to the ICU of a private hospital after experiencing complications, when R&D company contacted them and offered the medicine – tablets and injection – under trial.

On 21 January night, said the report, the two brothers had dinner and went to bed as usual. However, when Siddappa attempted to wake Nagesh on Wednesday, he was unresponsive. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Screen 'Chhaava' for experts before release: Minister

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

Maharashtra Minister Uday Samant has demanded that the upcoming Vicky Kaushal film "Chhaava", which portrays Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Sambhaji, be screened for experts prior to its release. In a post on X, Samant expressed his support for the film, emphasising the importance of understanding Sambhaji's historical significance. However, he noted concerns over potentially objectionable scenes, urging producers and directors to rectify these issues immediately. He stated, "Our position is that this film should not be released without first showing it to experts and knowledgeable people". —*PTI*

Maharashtra govt forms SIT to probe immigration

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

The Maharashtra government has set up an SIT to probe the issuance of birth and death certificates on delayed applications amid complaints of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh living in parts of the state, an official said on Saturday. The Special Investigation Team led by Inspector General Datta Karale will probe the issuance of birth and death certificates on delayed applications, the official from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) told PTI. Delayed applications are made at least a year after the birth or death of a person. The issue has gained prominence after police arrested a 30-year-old Bangladeshi national in the knife attack on actor Saif Ali Khan and BJP leader Kirit Somaiya's allegation of a birth certificate scam —*PTI*

SC to hear Tahir Hussain's bail plea on 28 Jan

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court will hear former councillor and February 2020 Delhi riots accused Tahir Hussain's plea for interim bail on 28 January. Hussain, who is campaigning for the upcoming Assembly polls, was denied bail on January 22 due to a split verdict from a two-judge bench. The Delhi High Court had previously granted Hussain custody parole on 14 January to file nomination papers for the Mustafabad constituency but rejected his plea for bail to contest the 5 February election, citing the seriousness of the accusations against him. Hussain faces multiple charges related to the riots that resulted in 53 deaths, including a case concerning the death of Intelligence Bureau staffer Ankit Sharma. —*PTI*

Congress MLA held, released on bail in suicide abetment

WAYANAD, 25 JAN

Congress MLA I C Balakrishnan was arrested on Saturday in connection with the alleged abetment of suicide of the party's Wayanad district office-bearer N M Vijayan. According to police, Balakrishnan's arrest was recorded after two days of questioning, but he was released after the court had granted him anticipatory bail, on the condition that he should turn up for interrogation. The police on 9 January booked Balakrishnan and three others on charges of abetment to suicide under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in connection with the deaths of Vijayan and his son. Seventy-eight-year-old Vijayan, the Wayanad DCC treasurer, and his son Jijesh, 38, died by suicide at Kozhikode Government Medical College Hospital on 27 December, 2024. —*PTI*

Amit Shah pledges Yamuna clean-up ahead of Delhi polls

BJP promises ownership rights to residents of 1,700 unauthorised colonies

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

IWith just under two weeks to go before the Delhi Assembly polls, senior BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah has unveiled a range of welfare schemes and policy promises in an effort to win over voters. The BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' manifesto, released by Shah, aims to address key issues affecting Delhiites, from the environment to jobs and infrastructure.

One of the key pledges is to clean the polluted Yamuna River within three years. Additionally, the BJP has promised to provide full ownership rights to the residents of 1,700 unauthorised colonies across the city. Mr Shah assured that this move would enable residents to buy, sell, and construct properties within these colonies. He also pledged to continue existing welfare programmes for the poor, while introducing new measures to support those struggling to make ends meet. These include the creation of a gig workers welfare board, which would provide insurance and accident cover, as well as training and placement services. Further, the Union minister took a dig at Kejriwal, saying the people of Delhi are waiting for his "world-famous" dip in the Yamuna, which he had promised and assured that the river would be cleaned in seven years. He also suggested that Kejriwal take a dip in the Ganga at Prayagraj, where Maha Kumbh is currently underway. Delhi will go to polls on 5 February and the results be out on 8 February. —*PTI*

BJP candidate Parvesh Verma with a cutout of AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal at Yamuna Ghatin New Delhi on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Cong pledges free 'tirth yatra' to Buddhist sites

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The Congress Party has pledged to offer free 'tirth yatra' for Buddhist pilgrimage sites if elected in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections. Former Delhi MP Udit Raj expressed concerns during a press conference, highlighting the absence of pilgrimage schemes for Buddhist sites, which the Congress aims to address.

Raj pointed out that the Delhi government already organises free pilgrimages for senior citizens to various religious sites such as Tirupati, Ayodhya, and Vaishno Devi, questioning why similar provisions do not exist for Buddhist locations, including Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, and Lumbini. "If our government comes, we will not discriminate and will provide free pilgrimage for them as well," he stated. AAP government introduced the 'Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Yojana' in 2019, enabling elderly residents to visit 15 prominent pilgrimage sites across India. Raj also raised concerns about a recent announcement by AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal to provide an Rs 18,000 monthly honourarium for priests at various temples and gurdwaras, emphasising calls for similar recognition for Buddhist monks and priests.

Earlier in the week, Congress leaders protested outside Kejriwal's residence, advocating for the same compensation for Buddhist clergy. Raj noted that Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath publicly supported their cause during a recent meeting. The Delhi Assembly elections are set to take place on 5 February, with results expected on 8 February. —*PTI*

Jairam Ramesh PHOTO: PTI

BJP, AAP ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN: RAMESH

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh on Saturday slammed Aam Aadmi Party and Bharatiya Janata Party alleging a "collusion" between them.

Ramesh suggested a link between Anna Hazare's movement and RSS while claiming that AAP is the "B Team" of BJP.

Ramesh further cleared that the INDIA alliance was formed for Lok Sabha elections and has no workings in Delhi Assembly polls. Ramesh lashed out at Former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and said that he became CM by lying.

"The Sheila Dikshit government worked for the development of Delhi. In the past ten years, we saw only 'jumlas' and announcements. Arvind Kejriwal became the Chief Minister of Delhi by lying," Ramesh said. —*ANI*

President Droupadi Murmu with CEC Rajiv Kumar during an event on the 15th National Voters' Day in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

Ahead of Republic Day, Prez Murmu bats for ONOE

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday advocated for the "One Nation One Election" initiative, asserting it has the potential to redefine "good governance" in the country by promoting consistency in governance, preventing policy paralysis, mitigating resource diversion, and alleviating financial burdens on the state.

In her address to the nation ahead of the 76th Republic Day, she emphasised the government's ongoing efforts to "eliminate remnants of a colonial mindset that have lingered in the country for decades" and cited the replacement of the British-era criminal laws with three new modern laws.

"We have been witnessing concerted efforts to change that mindset... Reforms of such magnitude require an audacity of vision," she said.

Highlighting the significance of the proposed bill aimed at synchronising election schedules across the country, Murmu noted, "The 'One Nation One Election' plan can offer numerous benefits, including enhanced governance and reduced financial strain."

She mentioned the introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, which prioritise the delivery of justice over mere punishment and place a strong emphasis on addressing crimes against women and children. She also pointed to the persistently high economic growth rate in recent years. She underscored the importance of inclusive growth and the government's commitment to welfare. —*PTI*

BSP LEADER SHOT DEAD IN HARYANA'S NARAINGARH

AMBALA, 25 JAN

A Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader from Haryana's Ambala was shot dead by armed assailants here in Naraingarh, police said on Saturday.

Police said that BSP leader Harbilas Singh Rajjumajra was accompanied by two friends, Puneet and Gugal, when the attack occurred while they were in their car on Friday evening. Puneet also sustained bullet injuries.

After the attack, they were rushed to PGIMER, Chandigarh where Harbilas succumbed to his injuries late at night while Puneet was stated to be out of danger. Police said the attackers have so far not been identified. Superintendent of Police, Ambala, SS Bhoria said that a team has been constituted to nab the assailants. —*PTI*

People leaving YSRCP reflects its situation: Naidu as Reddy quits

AMARAVATI, 25 JAN

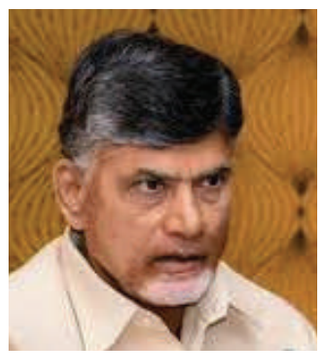
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said on Saturday that the continuous desertions of leaders from a party reflects its current situation, in an obvious reference to the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP following V Vijayasai Reddy resigning from the Rajya Sabha.

Without invoking the opposition party's name or Reddy, the CM answered a reporter's question about why the opposition party is regularly facing desertions.

Reddy on Saturday said he submitted his resignation to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and the same was accepted.

Reddy had said that he would not join any political part. Reddy had said that his interests are is agriculture and giving guest lectures in various universities and sharing his knowledge with the youth and students

"There is no answer from us regarding why their party members are leaving. If there is faith, they will stay; otherwise, they will find their way and avenues. That reflects the situation of that party, I can say," said Naidu after addressing a press conference on his recent visit to Davos. —*PTI*



N Chandrababu Naidu; Vijayasai Reddy PHOTO: PTI

CEC urges political parties to avoid fake narratives

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on Saturday requested political parties to avoid disruptive campaigning and fake narratives, saying it might cause disillusionment among youngsters regarding the electoral process. He was addressing the 15th National Voters' Day event in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and representatives of political parties.

At the same time, Kumar assured political parties EC would respond in writing to concerns flagged by them on the electoral process and the suggestions made by them to improve the system. He also flagged the trend of misinformation calling them the single-biggest threat to democratic processes worldwide.

"I would also urge them to avoid disruptive campaigning so that our youth do not get disillusioned and move away from the electoral process," Kumar said. Meanwhile, Congress hit out at EC, saying the "self-congratulation" on Voters' Day would not obscure the fact that the panel as it has been functioning makes a "mockery" of the Constitution and is an insult to the voters themselves —*PTI*

CPI(M) slams JPC suspensions, says should be opposed

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has expressed strong disapproval regarding the recent suspension of opposition members from the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) responsible for reviewing the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. The party's Politburo condemned the actions of the committee's chairman, BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, accusing him of suspending opposition members on tenuous grounds due to their dissenting views.

In an official statement, the CPI(M) asserted, "Nothing could be more brazen than undermining the legitimate parliamentary process through the committee system, which has been clearly established and reinforced over the years." The party called on all those who value democracy to unite against this "brazen act" by the ruling NDA government.

On Friday, ten opposition members were suspended from the JPC during a meeting where they accused the chairperson of rendering the proceedings a "farce."

The committee is set to adopt its draft report next week. The suspension applies only to Friday's meeting, and the opposition MPs are permitted to attend the next session on 27 January, where a detailed clause-by-clause examination of the Bill will take place before finalising the report. —*PTI*

ACKNOWLEDGING VALOUR

942 cops awarded gallantry and service medals

JAMMU, 25 JAN

A total of 942 police, fire and civil defence personnel have been awarded different categories of gallantry and service medals on the eve of the Republic Day, according to a government statement issued on Saturday.

These include 95 gallantry medals.

The awardees include the personnel of police, fire, home guard and civil defence and those working in correctional services, the Union home ministry said.

Among the gallantry award winners, 28 deployed in Left Wing Extremism-affected areas, 28 in the Jammu and Kashmir region, three in the northeast and 36 posted in other regions are being awarded for their gallant action, it said. Of the 101 President's Medals for Distinguished Service 85 have been awarded to police personnel, five to fire services personnel, seven to civil defence and home guard service and four to correctional service. Among the 746 Medals for Meritorious Service 634 have been awarded to police service, 37 to fire service, 39 to civil defence and home guard service and 36 to correctional service, the statement said. The Medal for Gallantry is awarded for a rare conspicuous act of gallantry and a conspicuous act of gallantry in saving life, property or in preventing crime the risk incurred being estimated with regard to the obligations and duties of the officer concerned. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

30 unsung heroes awarded with Padma Shri

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

A 100-year old freedom fighter from Goa, a Dhak player from West Bengal who trained 150 women in the male-dominated field and India's first woman puppeteers are among 30 unsung heroes who were awarded Padma Shri, a government statement said on Saturday.

Libia Lobo Sardesai, who played an important role in Goa's freedom movement, cofounded an underground radio station -- 'Voz da Liberdabe (Voice of Freedom)' -- in a forested area in 1955 to rally people against the Portuguese rule.

She has been awarded the Padma Shri by the President on the occasion of 76th Republic Day.

Also among the awardees is Gokul Chandra Dey, a 57-year old Dhak player from West Bengal who broke the gender stereotype by training 150 women in the male-dominated field.

Dey also created a lightweight Dhak type, 1.5 kg less than the conventional instrument, and represented India at various international platforms and performed with Maestros like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Zakir Hussain.

A vocal advocate of woman empowerment, 82-year old Sally Holkar transformed once dying Maheshwari craft and founded Handloom school in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh, to give training in traditional weaving techniques.

Born in America and Inspired by Rani Ahilyabai Holkar's legacy, she devoted five decades of her life to revitalise 300-year-old weaving legacy. —*PTI*

Libia Lobo Sardesai; Gokul Chandra Dey PHOTO: X

Rana's extradition to help unravel Pak's role

Tahawwur Hussain Rana is an accused in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks that left 166 dead

WASHINGTON, 25 JAN

The extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana to India may allow agencies to further probe into the audacious 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks and the role of Pakistani state actors in the carnage that left 166 dead, including US, British and Israeli nationals, in 2008.

"We are looking forward to the early extradition of Rana, who could shed light on some new aspects of 26/11, if any," an official who was part of the probe into the 26/11 attacks said.

Currently detained at the Metropolitan Detention Centre in Los Angeles, Rana is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

Headley obtained consent from Rana, who owned First World Immigration Services in Chicago and elsewhere, to open a First World office in Mumbai as a cover for his activities.

"Rana directed an individual associated with First World to prepare documents supporting Headley's cover story of opening a First World office in Mumbai and advised Headley how to obtain a visa for travel to India, according to Headley's testimony, as well as emails and other documents that corroborated his account," the US government said.

Pakistani intelligence agency ISI and the army had conspired and executed India's worst terror attack in Mumbai by sending 10 terrorists to the city on 26 November, 2008.

The group targeted multiple iconic locations in Mumbai, including Taj Mahal and Oberoi hotels, Leopold Cafe, Chabad House and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus train station, each of which Headley had scouted in advance.

FBI of the United States arrested Rana in Chicago a year after the attacks in October 2009 for arranging material support for terrorist attacks in Mumbai and Copenhagen.

Rana was convicted for arranging logistics for the beheading of employees of the Danish newspaper Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten, among other crimes. India has been trying to extradite Rana for many years because of his association with the terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Headley and his active involvement in the Mumbai attacks. It is alleged that Rana was aware of Headley's terror links and even helped in reconnaissance of targets in Mumbai and planning the attacks on the National Defence College (NDC) in New Delhi and Chabad House in Mumbai.

In his petition, Rana argued that he was tried and acquitted by the federal court in the Northern District of Illinois (Chicago) on charges relating to the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks but the US prosecutors did not agree. —*PTI*

Pakistani intelligence agency ISI and the army had conspired and executed India's worst terror attack in Mumbai by sending 10 terrorists to the city on 26 November, 2008 **PHOTO: PTI**

7 FUGITIVES INDIA SEEKS TO EXTRADITE

1 Vijay Mallya: The liquor baron and Ex-RS MP, absconded in 2016 to the UK while facing a loan default case of ₹9,000 crore after the collapse of Kingfisher Airlines.

2 Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi: The diamantaires behind the ₹14,000 crore PNB scam case fled the country in 2018. Nirav is in London jail since 2019. Mehul is allegedly living in Antigua and Barbuda.

3 Dawood Ibrahim: The mob boss and drug lord behind the 1993 Mumbai attack is rumored to be living in Karachi, Pakistan.

4 Anmol Bishnoi: Gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's younger brother is wanted in NCP leader Baba Siddique's and singer Sidhu Moose Wala's murder. He is now jailed in US' Iowa.

5 Goldy Brar: The Canadian gangster is a designated terrorist who works for Babbar Khalsa International and is considered a close aide of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

6 Arshdeep Singh Gill: Khalistani terrorist Gill, also known as Arsh Dalla, is wanted in 50 cases. The close aide of Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar is the leader of the banned Khalistan Tiger Force.

7 Sanjay Bhandari: The arms dealer fled to the UK in 2016 after being accused of tax evasion and money laundering.

More than 1 person involved in Saif's stabbing case: Cops

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

Mumbai police suspect more than one person may be involved in the Saif Ali Khan stabbing case, in which a 30-year-old Bangladeshi national has been arrested, an official said on Saturday.

A official said the police collected blood samples and clothes of Khan and his staff present during the stabbing at the actor's residence in Bandra on 16 January, and have sent them to the Forensic Science Laboratory for examination. On 19 January, the police arrested Shariful Islam Shehzad Mohammad Rohilla Amin Fakir alias Vijay Das, a Bangladeshi national, for the attack from neighbouring Thane city.

The official said the accused was not cooperating with the investigation team. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Wives of alcoholic spouses marry each other in UP

GORAKHPUR, 25 JAN

Fed up with their alcoholic husbands, two women left their homes and married each other. Kavita and Gunja alias Bablu tied the knot at the Shiva Temple, in Deoria, Uttar Pradesh on Thursday evening. They told reporters that they first connected on Instagram and were brought closer by their similar circumstances with both enduring domestic violence. During the wedding, Gunja assumed the role of the groom, applied sindoor to Kavita, exchanged garlands, and completed the seven pheras. "We were tormented by our husbands' drinking and abusive behaviour. This pushed us to choose a life of peace and love. We have decided to live in Gorakhpur as a couple and work to sustain ourselves," Gunja said. —*PTI*

Mentally ill woman gangraped in Goa; 5 arrested

PANAJI, 25 JAN

Five persons have been arrested for allegedly raping a mentally challenged woman in South Goa, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred in Margao on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, an official said.

Superintendent of Police (South) Sunita Sawant said one of the accused befriended the woman, in her 20s, at Margao bus stand and took her to another location in a bus. She said that the accused took the woman to an apartment, where four others joined him, and they allegedly gangraped the woman. The official said the woman's mother lodged a complaint, based on which the accused were arrested under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS). —*PTI*

Ahead of R-Day, explosives recovered in Assam

GUWAHATI, 25 JAN

A cache of explosives buried in a jungle was recovered in Assam's Sonitpur district on Saturday, as security was tightened across the state for 76th Republic Day celebrations, police said. The explosives, including five grenades and three detonators, were found wrapped in a polythene bag during a search operation. Government railway police has been conducting intensive checking of trains, railway tracks, bridges and passenger belongings, in coordination with district police and railway police force. Special arrangements have been made at the venues, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma among others set to attend. The ULFA(I) and NSCN/GPRN had called for a total strike from midnight to 6 pm of Sunday, urging the people of Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh to stay away from the celebrations. —*PTI*

A patient from Badhaal village being taken to a hospital amidthe deaths of at least 17 people in Rajouri **PHOTO: PTI**

J&K mysterious deaths: No leaves for doctors

RAJOURI/JAMMU, 25 JAN

Authorities have cancelled all leaves of doctors and paramedics in the wake of a medical alert following the deaths of 17 people from Badhaal village in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district due to a mysterious illness.

The number of people sent to quarantine has risen to 230.

Union minister Dr Jitendra Singh said the initial investigation conducted by the toxicology laboratory in Lucknow concluded that the cause was not any infection, virus or bacteria but a toxin.

Four people, including three sisters, were shifted to hospitals, with three airlifted to a hospital in Jammu on Wednesday.

More people, including relatives who had come in contact with the victim families, were sent on Friday to quarantine as a precautionary measure.

Badhaal village was declared a containment zone on Wednesday, with prohibitory orders imposed on all public and private gatherings in the wake of the deaths.

Seventeen people, including 13 children, from the families of Mohammad Fazal,

'Kill tiger' protest erupts after Kerala woman's death

WAYANAD, 25 JAN

Mananthavady, 25 Jan – Intense protests broke out in the Mananthavady area on Saturday following the fatal tiger attack on a 47-year-old woman, Radha, who was mauled while plucking coffee at Priyadarshini Estate on Friday. Locals, including tribal women, demanded that the tiger be killed rather than captured alive, after her funeral. They gathered outside the forest officials' base camp, questioning why efforts were being made to cage the animal despite an order to shoot it.

Forest officials clarified that Chief Wildlife Warden Pramod G Krishnan's order prioritizes capturing or tranquilizing the tiger in line with the National Tiger Conservation Authority's SOP. If this fails, the tiger will be shot. Despite this, protestors were dissatisfied, continuing to demonstrate. The previous day, locals had prevented the victim's remains from being taken for postmortem until authorities assured them of safety and the tiger's capture or killing. In response, Minister OR Kelu promised action, allowing Radha's remains to be taken for postmortem. —*PTI*

Banke temple gets FCRA permit

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The Central government issued a licence under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) to Banke Bihari Temple, citing its frequent receipt of foreign currencies through offerings and donations from abroad.

Banke Bihari Temple, located in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh, is one of the most famous and revered temples of Lord Krishna.

As per sources privy to the Ministry of Home Affairs' FCRA is approved after due application and its processing after court approval.

According to the management committee, the temple frequently receives foreign currencies in its offerings and seeks to accept donations from abroad to enhance its operations.

As per sources close to MHA, FCRA is approved after due application and its processing after court approval **PHOTO: PTI**

Previously, the temple was managed privately by a family of priests. However, it is now under the management of a court-formed committee, which applied for the FCRA license to streamline the handling of foreign contributions. With the FCRA license now granted, the Banke Bihari temple can legally accept and manage foreign contributions, which will help support its maintenance, activities, and charitable endeavours. —*PTI*

RG Kar victim's parents blame Didi

KOLKATA, 25 JAN

The parents of the RG Kar hospital victim said that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee cannot disown the responsibility for the attempt of the police and hospital authorities to destroy evidence of rape and murder of their daughter.

They attempted to shield the "main conspirators" behind the crime, while CBI failed to bring to book all the perpetrators and overlooked the larger conspiracy aspect, the parents claimed.

PHOTO: PTI

TMC termed the allegations "unfortunate".

The body of the 31-year-old post-graduate trainee was found in the seminar hall of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on 9 August last year. The trial court on 20 January sentenced Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment till death.

"She has to explain why the crime scene could not be sealed and the evidence was tampered with by the entry of a large number of onlookers, and why from the footage of 68 people moving in the area on 9 August, only one person was identified, she asked. —*PTI*

SRK to get ₹9 cr refund from state for Mannat

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

Actor Shahrukh Khan is likely to get a refund of Rs 9 crore from Maharashtra government following an error in calculation by the Mumbai suburban collectorate while converting the lease on his sea-facing home Mannat to full ownership.

The property, spread over 2,446 square metres, was leased by the actor and his wife, Gauri Khan through a registered agreement in 2001.

Since heritage laws do not permit any structural changes to the building, Khan built a multi-storey annexe behind the bungalow that serves as the family's primary residence.

Subsequently in 2019, the Khans converted the ownership of leased property (class2) to complete ownership (class1) and for which they had to once again pay a premium of Rs 27.5 crore.

The couple paid 25 per cent of the ready reckoner price in March 2019 as per the state policy. —*Agencies*

VIPs' security personnel to get 20% spl allowance

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The Centre has announced a special pay allowance for commandos of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) assigned to VIP security duties for individuals under the Z+ and Z+ (ASL) categories. These security personnel will receive a Special Security Allowance (SSA) of 20 per cent of their basic pay. However, personnel assigned to lower security categories (Z, Y+, Y, and X) will not benefit from the allowance.

The order, issued by the Department of Expenditure under the Union Finance Ministry on Thursday, follows a proposal from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). —*PTI*

COURTESY GOOGLE MAP

French cyclists on way to Everest get lost in UP

BAREILLY, 24 JAN

Two French tourists cycling from Delhi to Kathmandu got lost and reached near Churaili Dam here, police said on Friday.

The two were spotted by some villagers cycling at night and taken to Churaili police outpost.

Police lodged the cyclists at the village Pradhan's house for the night and sent them on their way on Friday with route instructions.

Baheri Circle Officer Arun Kumar Singh said French citizens Brian Jacques Gilbert and Sebastian Francois Gabriel had come to Delhi from France by flight on 7 January.

"They had to go to Kathmandu in Nepal via Tanakpur from Pilibhit. Both foreigners were waylaid by Google Maps in the dark. The app showed them a shortcut via Baheri in Bareilly, due to which they got lost and reached Churaili Dam," the CO said.

Police lodged the cyclists at the village Pradhan's house for the night and sent them on their way on Friday with route instructions **PHOTO: BAREILLY POLICE**

"When the villagers saw both the foreigners roaming on bicycles on a deserted road at 11 pm Thursday, they could not understand their language. To avoid any incident with the two foreigners, they took both of them to the Churaili police outpost," Singh said.

When Senior Superintendent of Police Anurag Arya came to know about the matter, he spoke to both the French tourists and instructed police to guide them to their destination. —*PTI*

3 in 4 animal bites in India due to dogs: Lancet

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Three in every four animal bites are due to dogs, with 5,726 deaths in humans estimated to occur each year due to rabies in India, according to a study published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-study conducted a nationwide survey from March, 2022 to August, 2023, covering 60 districts in 15 states.

Over 78,800 households involving 3,37,808 individuals were interviewed about animal bites in the family, anti-rabies vaccination and deaths due to animal bite.

Over 2,000 of those surveyed reported a history of animal bite -- 76.8 per cent of which (1,576) were dog bites.

Further, over six per thousand people might be experiencing an animal bite, "translating into 9.1 million bites nationally", the authors said.

PHOTO: X

However, reliable and recent estimates of deaths in humans due to rabies are not available in India, where a third of global cases occur, the researchers said.

The authors also found that among the people who had been bitten by a dog (1,576), over a fifth did not receive an anti-rabies vaccination, while two-thirds (1,043) received at least three doses.

Nearly half of the 1,253 individuals who received one dose did not complete their full course of vaccination, the team said. —*PTI*

Celebrating Free India

India's power, pride & 75 years of Constitution

India is set to showcase its military prowess and rich cultural heritage and display a symbolic confluence of 'virasat' and 'vikas' on Kartavya Path here to mark the 76th Republic Day on 26 January when the nation will also commemorate the platinum jubilee of the enactment of the Constitution.

While 75 years of the Constitution is the focus of celebrations this year, the theme for the tableaux is 'Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas'.

Sixteen tableaux from across states and Union Territories and 15 from central ministries, departments and organisations will roll down the ceremonial boulevard on Sunday.

The country will display its military prowess by showcasing some of the cutting-edge defence platforms including BrahMos, Pinaka and Akash, with the Army's Battle Surveillance System 'Sanjay' and DRDO's surface-to-surface tactical missile 'Pralay' set to register their presence in the ceremonial parade for the first time.

T-90 'Bhishma' tanks Sarath (infantry carrying vehicle BMP-II), Short Span Bridging System 10m, Nag Missile System, multi-barrel rocket launcher system 'Agnibaan' and 'Bajrang' (light specialist vehicle) will also be part of the parade, officials said on Thursday.

The parade will see many other firsts as well, such as the tri-services tableau that will depict the spirit of "jointness" among the armed forces.

The tableau would display a battlefield scenario demonstrating a synchronised operation in land, water and air with the indigenous Arjun battle tank, Tejas fighter aircraft and advanced light helicopter, according to the Defence Ministry.

The theme of the tri-services tableau will be 'Shashakt aur Surakshit Bharat' (Strong and Secure India).

Besides, the DRDO will present a tableau with the theme 'Raksha Kavach -- multi-layer protection against multi-domain threats', officials said.

President Droupadi Murmu will deliver an address to the nation on the eve of the Republic Day.

This 26 January will carry extra significance as India's Constitution, which came into effect on this historic day in 1950, completes 75 years.

The Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26 November, 1949.

Before the parade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the nation in paying tribute to the country's martyrs by laying a wreath at the National War Memorial.

The parade will begin in the morning with the National Salute and will continue for 90 minutes, reflecting the journey of India's heritage and growth.

C-130J Super Hercules, C-295, C-17 Globemaster, P-8I, MiG-29 and Su-30, among other aircraft, will also take part in the celebrations.

The ceremonial parade will be heralded by 300 cultural artistes playing 'Sare Jahan Se Achha' on musical instruments representing different parts of the country, according to the Defence Ministry.

Lt Gen Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area will be the Parade Commander, while Parade Second-in-Command will be Chief of Staff (COS), Delhi Area, Maj Gen Sumit Mehta.

Maj Gen Mehta said the event will showcase India's military prowess with a number of cutting-edge platforms and a range of vibrant tableaux depicting the country's heritage.

Two Param Vir Chakra awardees -- both Kargil war heroes -- and one Ashok Chakra awardee will be part of the parade, he said.

The flypast will feature 40 Indian Air Force aircraft and three Dornier aircraft of the Indian Coast Guard.

The Indian Army will be represented by a mounted column, eight mechanised columns, and six marching contingents, officials said. The column will be represented by the 61 Cavalry.

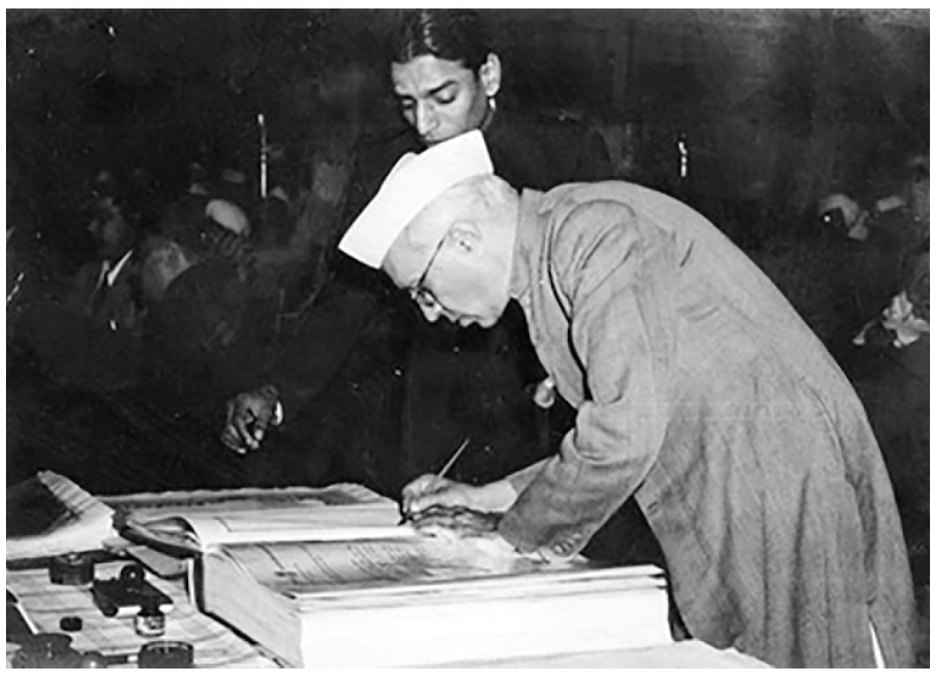
The marching columns will consist of contingents from the Brigade of the Guards contingent, Jat Regiment, Garhwal Rifles Regiment, J&K Light Infantry (JAKLI) regiment and a contingent of the Corps of Engineers.

Capt Ritika Khareta will be the contingent commander of a marching contingent of the Army's Corps of Signals. The officer is the only woman member of her contingent and the rest are men.

States that will display their tableaux during the 76th Republic Day Parade include Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Delhi and Chandigarh will showcase them among the Union Territories. —*PTI*

How India celebrated its 1st Republic Day

Dr Rajendra Prasad signing a copy of the new Constitution of the Indian Republic at the Constitution Hall, now known as the Central Hall of Parliament, in New Delhi **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA**



Jawaharlal Nehru signing the Constitution of India **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA**

WHY 26 JANUARY WAS CHOSEN AS START DATE FOR CONSTITUTION

On 26 January, 1930, Indian National Congress declared Poorna Swaraj, marking it as Independence Day. After India's independence, the Constitution was adopted on 26 November, 1949, and came into effect on 26 January, 1950, commemorating Poorna Swaraj Day. Republic Day celebrates India's democratic values, reminding citizens of equality and their role in governance. It unites the nation's diverse cultures while emphasising the Constitution's significance in defining rights and duties. The day is marked by a grand parade showcasing armed forces, cultural performances, and state tableaux. The national flag is hoisted, followed by a 21-gun salute and cultural events nationwide.

The three defence services during a march at the Red Fort ground. The Parade covered a 24-km route, including Red Fort and Walled City areas **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA**

BIRTH OF INDIAN REPUBLIC

After India gained independence on 15 August, 1947, it continued to be governed by the Government of India Act of 1935. Significant changes followed, with a drafting committee formed under Dr BR Ambedkar to create the Indian Constitution. The committee, which included notable members such as KM Munshi and Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, worked to replace the colonial-era act. Dr Rajendra Prasad became first president, signifying India's complete break from British rule and the establishment of a democratic nation.

The 34th and last Governor General of India, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari read out a proclamation announcing the birth of the Republic of India **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA**

WHY INDIA HOISTS FLAG ON INDEPENDENCE DAY, UNFURLS IT ON R-DAY

On Republic Day, the flag is unfurled, not hoisted. Unfurling involves spreading the folded flag already attached to a rope, while hoisting entails lifting the flag from the base of the pole. On Republic Day, the President unfurls the flag at the top of the pole, symbolising India's shift from colonial rule to a democratic republic. On Independence Day, the Prime Minister hoists the flag, signifying freedom from colonial rule and the birth of a new nation. Both ceremonies celebrate India's journey to independence and its growth as a sovereign state. The difference between hoisting the flag on Independence Day and unfurling it on Republic Day underscores India's historic milestones.

Army to debut surveillance systems, 'Pralay' missiles

Ahead of Republic Day, the Indian Army revealed two new features for this year's parade: battlefield surveillance systems and a DRDO tableau showcasing Pralay, short-range ballistic missiles. Major General Sumit Mehta highlighted that these are the first-time additions, along with the Indonesian president attending as chief guest for the fourth time. Around 5,000 cultural artists will perform along the ceremonial path, ensuring visibility for all attendees. A beating retreat ceremony will take place on 29 January at Vijay Chowk.

Indian Gurkhas and Air Force shine in the Full Dress Rehearsal ahead of Republic Day celebrations at Manekshaw Parade Ground, Bengaluru **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Who is the Chief Guest this year?

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will attend this year's Republic Day celebrations as the chief guest. Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh announced that a 160-member marching contingent and a 190-member band contingent from Indonesia will join the Indian Armed Forces in the parade at Kartavya Path. This year's celebrations will highlight achievers from various fields, focusing on their contributions to nation-building. Around 10,000 special guests from 34 categories, including sarpanches from villages excelling in government schemes, disaster relief workers, artisans, and innovators, have been invited to witness the grand parade.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports Mansukh Mandaviya, Union MoS for Defence Sanjay Seth and Union MoS for Youth Affairs & Sports Raksha Khadse during an interaction with NCC cadets, NSS volunteers, tribal guests and tableaux artists participating in the Republic Day Parade 2025, at his residence in New Delhi, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Trump calls for OPEC to drop oil prices

He blames OPEC for the 3-year Russia-Ukraine war, citing its impact on energy markets

WASHINGTON DC/ LOS ANGELES, 25 JAN

US President Donald Trump has asked the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to cut the prices of oil, arguing that it would stop the Russia-Ukraine war.

He had made a similar claim earlier, too. Addressing the annual World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland via video conference, Trump accused the OPEC+ alliance of oil-exporting countries of being responsible for the nearly three-year conflict in Ukraine. Noting that a large number of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers have died in the conflict so far, Trump said, "Right now, it's just bullets whacking and hitting men. There are over a million men killed, and they are losing thousands of people a week."

"One way to stop it quickly is for OPEC to stop making so much money and to drop the price of oil. If you have it high, that war is not going to end so easily. So, OPEC ought to get on the ball and they ought to drop the price of oil. And the war will stop right away," Trump added.

Addressing the annual WEF at Davos via video conference, Trump accused the OPEC+ alliance of being responsible for war **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

Meanwhile, he sacked at least a dozen internal government watchdogs.

Independent inspectors general of at least 12 federal agencies were notified of their immediate dismissals via emails from the White House personnel director, The Washington Post reported, citing unnamed people familiar with the actions.

Trump proposes getting rid of FEMA

Trump said he was considering "getting rid of" the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during a trip to disaster zones offering the latest sign of how he is weighing sweeping changes to the nation's central organization for responding to disasters.

Instead of having federal financial assistance flow through FEMA, the Republican president said "FEMA has been a very big disappointment," the Republican president said. "It's very bureaucratic. And it's very slow."

Trump admin begins deportation flights

Mass deportation of illegal immigrants has been one of the major poll promises of the Trump campaign. As part of it, Trump has also signed an executive order declaring that future children born to undocumented immigrants would no longer be treated as citizens. Border policies have already led to the arrest of 538 illegal immigrants and deportation flights using military aircraft, the first since President Dwight Eisenhower, have begun. —*PTI*

Trump, Vance join anti-abortion march

President Donald Trump vowed to support anti-abortion-rights protesters in his second term as tens of thousands of demonstrators rallied in Washington for the annual March for Life.

"We will again stand proudly for families and for life," Trump declared in a pre-recorded video address.

Protesters had come to the capital for decades to call for the repeal of Roe v. Wade, which affirmed a constitutional right to an abortion. Now, with the repeal of Roe in 2022, they are now on the inside rather than the outside. With Trump's return and Republicans in control of Congress, the activists want to build on their victories. —*PTI*

People participating in the annual March for Life, pose in front of the Supreme Court, in Washington **PHOTO: PTI**

First monkeypox case reported in Pakistan in 2025

ISLAMABAD, 25 JAN

Pakistan has recorded its first case of monkeypox in the new year, as a patient who recently returned from Dubai tests positive for the viral disease. The individual, whose identity has not been disclosed, was identified through screening at Peshawar airport and is currently undergoing treatment at Services Hospital Peshawar. According to the Pakistan Ministry of Health, the patient's travel history has revealed connections to Gulf nations, sparking concerns about the spread of the virus. Monkeypox is a viral disease caused by the Mpox virus, typically characterised by a rash, fever, and swollen lymph nodes. Symptoms can include exhaustion, headache. —*PTI*

Storm Eowyn hits Ireland and UK with record winds

IRELAND, 25 JAN

Ireland and Northern Ireland are reeling from the destructive effects of Storm Eowyn, which struck on Friday with wind speeds exceeding 180 kmph. Tragically, one person died in Ireland when a tree fell on their car. The storm has paralysed public transport, closed schools, and resulted in hundreds of flight cancellations in Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Over 700,000 homes and businesses in Ireland and nearly 100,000 in Northern Ireland are without power, with restoration efforts expected to take over a week. Met Eireann issued a rare nationwide red warning for wind, citing life-threatening conditions and potential coastal flooding. Officials have urged the public to stay indoors, noting the storm's origins can be traced back to a recent winter storm in the Gulf of the United States. Climate change is believed to be intensifying storm severity.—*DW News*

Heil Tesla was projected on Tesla factory in Berlin, Germany with Elon Musk's controversial Nazi salute amid the ongoing row over his hand gesture at swearing-in ceremony Donald Trump. German authorities have initiated a probe into the matter **PHOTO: X**

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Kush Desai: Deputy Press Secretary

Indian-American former journalist Kush Desai is the new Deputy Press Secretary of Donald Trump. Desai earlier served as Deputy Communications Director for the 2024 Republican National Convention and Communications Director for the Republican Party of Iowa. Desai was also the Deputy Battle ground States and Pennsylvania Communications Director at the Republican National Committee. In this capacity, he played a key role in messaging and narrative building in the key battleground States in particular Pennsylvania.

Pete Hegseth: US Defence Secretary

The US Senate has narrowly confirmed Pete Hegseth as the country's Defence Secretary after Vice President JD Vance cast a rare tiebreaker vote. Hegseth's confirmation process has been mired in allegations of sexual assault, alcohol abuse and financial mismanagement of veterans' charities, all of which he has denied. He was also accused of sexually assaulting an unnamed woman in 2017 in a Monterey, California, hotel room. "I am not a perfect person, but redemption is real," he said during the hearing. Many Republican maintained their support.

Houthi rebels free 153 detainees, Hamas releases 4 Israeli soldiers

DUBAI, 25 JAN

Yemen's Houthi rebels announced the unilateral release of 153 war detainees on Saturday, as stated by the International Committee of the Red Cross. This gesture follows the Houthis' indication on Friday night that they would release prisoners, aimed at easing tensions following a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza. However, the release comes after the Houthis detained seven Yemeni UN workers, drawing ire from the international community. The Red Cross welcomed this release as a positive step towards reviving peace negotiations in Yemen's prolonged conflict.

Hamas freed four female Israeli soldiers amid a fragile ceasefire. It is part of an agreement wherein Israel is set to release 200 Palestinian prisoners, including 120 convicted of deadly attacks on Israelis. Israel confirmed the soldiers—Karina Ariev, Daniella Gilboa, Naama Levy, and Liri Albag—were returned to their forces after being presented in front of a large crowd in Gaza City. —*PTI*

Israel confirmed the soldiers—Karina Ariev, Daniella Gilboa, Naama Levy, and Liri Albag—were returned to their forces **PHOTO: X**

Nigerian army killed 79 militants last week

ABUJA, 25 JAN

In a significant military operation over the past week, Nigerian soldiers reported the deaths of 79 militants and suspected kidnappers. This action is part of an ongoing campaign against a decades-long insurgency by Islamic militants in the northeast, as well as various armed groups operating in the northwest.

According to a statement from military spokesperson Edward Buba, the nationwide operations also led to the arrest of 252 individuals and the liberation of 67 hostages previously held by militants. The Nigerian government has been intensifying its efforts to enhance security, particularly as over 35,000 civilians have been killed and more than two million displaced in the northeastern region, according to United Nations estimates.

Kidnappings have become increasingly prevalent in Nigeria's northwest, with armed groups exploiting the region's inadequate security. Victims are often released only after ransoms, sometimes reaching thousands of dollars. The 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Chibok highlighted the severity of this crisis.

Additionally, among those arrested, 28 suspects were linked to crude oil theft, a major issue in southern Nigeria that has cost the country over $46 billion in lost revenue between 2009 and 2020. The military also detained seven suspected members of the Indigenous People of Biafra, a separatist group seeking an independent Biafran state, stemming from a civil war that occurred from 1967 to 1970. —*PTI*

Sudan's civil war sparks blaze at largest oil refinery

DUBAI, 25 JAN

Fighting around Sudan's largest oil refinery has ignited a blaze that has sent thick, black smoke over Khartoum, satellite data analysed by The Associated Press indicates. The refinery, owned by the Sudanese government and China National Petroleum Corp, is a key asset in the civil war between the military led by Gen Abdel-Fattah Burhan and the rebel Rapid Support Force (RSF).

Forces loyal to Burhan claimed control of the al-Jaili refinery, located 60 kilometres north of the capital, which had been secured by the RSF since April 2023. Local media reported the RSF had surrounded the facility with landmines to deter attacks. Previous to Thursday's incident, the refinery had remained largely intact. On Thursday, a satellite observation indicated extensive fires across the facility, where oil tanks were seen burning. The Sudanese military accused the RSF of deliberately setting the refinery ablaze, while the RSF claimed the military used aircraft to bomb the site.

UN Secretary-General expressed concern about the violence and its consequences for the economy and environment. With an estimated death toll exceeding 28,000 since fighting began in April 2023, millions have been displaced, and food shortages continue to worsen in Sudan. —*PTI*

Philippines accuses China of harassing fishing vessels

MANILA, 25 JAN

The Philippine Coast Guard reported that Chinese coast guard ships and a naval helicopter harassed Philippine fisheries vessels conducting a scientific survey in the contested South China Sea, forcing them to cancel the operation. The incident occurred near Sandy Cay, amidst long-standing territorial disputes between China and several Southeast Asian nations, including the Philippines. Dramatic video footage showed a Chinese coast guard ship dangerously close to a Philippine vessel, while a helicopter hovered low over smaller boats. The Chinese government has yet to respond. The US has reiterated its commitment to defend the Philippines under a mutual defence treaty. —*PTI*

SL ex-prez Rajapaksa's son arrested on graft charges

COLOMBO, 25 JAN

Yoshitha Rajapaksa, son of former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa, was arrested by police on Saturday over corruption charges related to a property purchase. The ex-navy officer was taken into custody in Beliatta as part of an investigation into alleged misconduct during his father's presidency prior to 2015.

Yoshitha is the second of Mahinda Rajapaksa's three sons. His uncle, former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, was questioned by police last week regarding the same property—a holiday home located in the southern religious resort of Kataragama. It follows Mahinda Rajapaksa's filing of a fundamental rights petition in the Supreme Court on Friday, seeking the reinstatement of his significantly reduced security, a decision made by the government last month.

PHOTO: X

Amidst the backdrop of a new government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, which took office in November, Mahinda Rajapaksa's eldest son, Namal Rajapaksa, has also been interrogated by police over separate property charges. The new administration has pledged to hold accountable those accused of wrongdoing during Mahinda Rajapaksa's presidency from 2005 to 2015. —*PTI*

- Mahinda Rajapaksa's eldest son, Namal Rajapaksa, has also been interrogated by police over separate property charges

PHOTO: PTI

One killed in Turkey apartment building collapse

ISTANBUL, 25 JAN

Rescuers pulled the body of a 23-year-old woman from under a collapsed apartment building in central Turkiye on Saturday, state-run media said, as efforts continued to find a final person, believed to be her husband. Three others were retrieved from the wreckage and being treated in a hospital, Anadolu Agency reported. The collapse comes amid renewed focus on building safety following the deaths of 78 people in a fire on Tuesday that ripped through a 12-story hotel at a ski resort in northwestern Turkiye. Investigators are examining whether proper fire prevention measures were in place. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on Saturday that 79 people were registered as living in the four-story apartment block in the city of Konya, some 260kms south of the capital Ankara. —*PTI*

HALF A BILLION YRS OLD

2 mountains 100X taller than Everest found

LONDON, 25 JAN

The tallest mountains on Earth—more than 100 times higher than Mount Everest—have been discovered at the boundary between Africa and the Pacific Ocean. Groundbreaking research, published in the journal Nature, confirms the existence of these colossal peaks, which lie deep beneath the Earth's surface. The mountains rise to heights of around 1,000 km, dwarfing Mount Everest's 8.8 km elevation. Researchers estimate the structures are at least half a billion years old, though they may date back to Earth's formation around four billion years ago.

"Nobody knows what they are or whether they are a temporary phenomenon, or if they have been sitting there for millions or even billions of years," said Arwen Deuss, a seismologist and professor of Earth's deep interior structure at Utrecht University, as quoted by The New York Post.

The mountains rise to heights of around 1,000 km, dwarfing Mount Everest's 8.8 km elevation **PHOTO : INSTAGRAM**

The study reveals that the two massive formations sit at the boundary between Earth's core and mantle—the semi-solid layer beneath the crust—beneath Africa and the Pacific Ocean. These mountains are surrounded by a vast "graveyard of tectonic plates," transported to these depths by subduction, a process where one tectonic plate dives beneath another and sinks nearly 3,000 km into the Earth's interior, explained Deuss. For decades, scientists have known about enormous structures hidden deep within the Earth's mantle, thanks to seismic shockwaves that travel through the planet's interior. Large earthquakes cause the Earth to vibrate like a bell, and the "tone" becomes distorted when it encounters anomalous objects such as these superstructures. —*Agencies*

9 UN peacekeepers injured during clashes in Congo

GOMA, 25 JAN

Nine United Nations peacekeepers in eastern Congo sustained injuries during fighting with the M23 armed group, the UN said, as the rebels close in on Goma.

M23 has made significant territorial gains in recent weeks, encircling Goma, which has around 2 million people and is a regional hub for security and humanitarian efforts.

The peacekeepers were wounded during clashes with the rebels over the past two days in the town of Sake, the UN peacekeeping force in Congo, said in a statement Friday.

On Thursday, the rebels took control of the town, which is only 27kms west of Goma and one of the last main routes into the provincial capital still under government control, according to the UN chief.

M23 is one of about 100 armed groups that have been vying for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern Congo, along the border with Rwanda, in a decade-slong conflict that has created one of the world's largest hu-manitarian crises. The rebel group seized Goma in 2012 and controlled it for over a week. Since 2021, Congo's government and allied forces, including Burundian troops and UN troops, have been keeping M23 away from Goma.

Congo, the United States and UN experts accuse Rwanda of backing M23, which is mainly composed of ethnic Tutsis who broke away from the Congolese army over a decade ago. —*PTI*

- Since 2021, Congo and allied forces, including Burundian troops and UN troops, have been keeping M23 away from Goma

FII outflows continue: ₹19,759 crore sold in a week

FPIs have pulled out Rs 64,156 crore from Indian markets

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have been consistently selling their holdings in the Indian stock markets.

According to data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), FPIs sold equities worth Rs 19,759 crore during the week from 20 January to 24 January.

The data further revealed that in January alone, FPIs have pulled out Rs 64,156 crore from Indian markets.

This persistent selling is largely attributed to the return of Donald Trump to the political stage in the United States, which has boosted investor confidence in the US economy. The positive sentiment surrounding Trump's leadership and his efforts to improve the average American's life have made the US a more attractive destination for investments.

This persistent selling is largely attributed to the return of Donald Trump to political stage PHOTO: X

The shift of funds back to the US is also supported by rising interest rates on US treasury bonds and a strengthening US dollar. These factors have created an appealing environment for global investors, prompting them to withdraw from emerging markets like India.

This large-scale outflow of funds has had a significant impact on the Indian rupee, which has weakened against the dollar. The depreciation of the rupee has further fuelled FPI outflows, creating a cycle of persistent selling in Indian markets. Higher valuations in Indian markets, coupled with slowing earnings growth, have also deterred foreign investors.

However, the data for the last month, December, highlighted that net investment by FPIs in Indian equities stood positive, with a net investment of Rs 15,446 crore.

The FPI outflows highlight the challenges faced by emerging markets in attracting foreign capital amidst global uncertainties. *—ANI*

BUDGET 2025

Startups, healthcare, & insurance: SBI sets Budget agenda

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

PHOTO: ANI

As the Union Government gears up for Budget 2025, a report by State Bank of India stated that the government should give significant focus to revitalising the insurance and healthcare sectors in the country.

The report also noted that the government should consider exempting GST and taxes on term and health insurance premiums, increase the healthcare budget to 5 per cent of GDP, and rationalize GST rates on medical devices to a uniform 5 per cent -12 per cent.

Life insurance penetration has seen a sharper decline to 2.8 per cent, while non-life insurance remained stagnant at 1 per cent.

Several industry leaders have voiced their expectations for continued support, particularly in areas like venture capital funding, MSME growth, and emerging technologies such as AI and robotics.

The startup and venture capital (VC) ecosystem in India has witnessed remarkable growth in recent years, with the government's proactive policies playing a key role. *—ANI*

ICICI Bank Q3 profit rises 15% to ₹11,792 crore

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

ICICI Bank on Saturday reported 15 per cent rise in standalone net profit at Rs 11,792 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024. The second-largest private sector lender had earned a net profit of Rs 10,272 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to Rs 48,368 crore from Rs 42,792 crore in the same period a year ago, ICICI Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest income increased to Rs 41,300 crore during the quarter under review as compared to Rs 36,695 crore in the year-ago period. On the asset quality front, the bank's gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 1.96 per cent as against 2.3 per cent a year ago. Similarly, net NPAs, or bad loans, came down to 0.42 per cent from 0.44 per cent at the end of last year. *—PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

7K delegates from 20 nations to attend Odisha bizz conclave

BHUBANESWAR, 25 JAN

More than 7,500 delegates, including many from 20 foreign countries, will attend a business conclave in Odisha's Bhubaneswar scheduled to be held from 28-29 January, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the event on 28 January at Janata Maidan, the conclave venue, he said. The state is in all readiness to host the "biggest" business summit 'Utkarsh Odisha - Make In Odisha Conclave 2025', Majhi said on Friday. Majhi said more than 100 MoUs would be signed during the two-day conclave, which has the potential to create employment for 3.5 lakh people. Around 100 foreign delegates would com from various countries, including Singapore, Australia and Malaysia, the chief minister said. *—ANI*

Odisha tops NITI Aayog's fiscal health index

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Odisha has emerged as the top performer in the country for fiscal health in the Financial Year 2022-23, according to the recently released Fiscal Health Index (FHI) by NITI Aayog. The state secured the highest overall FHI score of 67.8, ranking No. 1 in the nation for the first time. The FHI report, which evaluates the fiscal health of Indian states based on key parameters, highlights Odisha's strong performance in several areas, particularly in Debt Index and Debt Sustainability. The state achieved an outstanding score of 99.0 in Debt Index, indicating its effective debt management, and 64.0 in Debt Sustainability, which reflects its ability to maintain manageable debt levels. *—ANI*

Yes Bank Q3 profit surges nearly threefold to ₹612 cr

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Yes Bank on Saturday reported nearly threefold jump in net profit to Rs 612 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024 helped by a fall in provisions for bad loans. The private sector bank had earned a net profit of Rs 231 crore in the same quarter of previous financial year. Total income increased to Rs 9,341 crore during the third quarter of the ongoing fiscal from Rs 8,179 crore a year ago, Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest income increased to Rs 7,829 crore from Rs 6,984 crore. Net interest income grew 10 per cent to Rs 2,224 crore as against Rs 2,017 crore in the third quarter last fiscal year. Net Interest Margin (NIM) of the bank remained flat at 2.4 per cent. *—PTI*

RAISES RS 5,000 CRORE

Dorf-Ketal Chemicals files IPO with SEBI

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Speciality chemicals company Dorf-Ketal Chemicals India Ltd has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator SEBI seeking its approval to raise Rs 5,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO).

The IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 1,500 crore and an offer for sale of shares worth Rs 3,500 crore by promoter Menon Family Holdings Trust, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Friday.

Proceeds from the fresh issue to the tune of Rs 82.90 crore will be allocated to repay debt of the company, Rs 33.30 crore will be invested in subsidiary Dorf Ketal Chemicals FZE to repay or prepay its outstanding borrowings, and the remaining funds will be used for general corporate purposes.

Founded in 1992, Dorf-Ketal Chemicals is an R&D and innovation-focused global manufacturer and supplier of specialty chemicals across the hydrocarbons and industrial supply chains, including the oil and gas, refining and petrochemicals industries, and customers with diverse applications across industrial segments.

With 542 patent registrations outside India, including 99 US patent registrations, and 29 patent registrations in India, the company is one of the few India-based chemical companies with global brand recognition.

JM Financial Ltd, Citigroup Global Markets India Private Ltd, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Ltd, J.P. Morgan India , Morgan Stanley India Company, and Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors Ltd are the lead managers. *—PTI*

Trump 2.0 embraces balanced trade over tariffs: Report

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The report also added that the global trade landscape has also evolved since Trump's first term PHOTO: PTI

As Donald Trump begins his second term as the President of the United States, his administration appears poised to take a more balanced approach to trade policies, according to a report by YES Securities.

The report highlighted a departure in Trump policies from the aggressive tariff-centric strategies that defined Trump's first term, signaling a shift towards a mix of trade negotiations and strategic tariff use.

It said "Vibes from Trump 2.0 regime inauguration suggest a shift from the aggressive tariff policies of his first term towards a more balanced approach that includes trade negotiations".

While these measures disrupted global trade and strained relations with several countries, they also created an environment for potential negotiations. This period saw heightened tensions as nations grappled with U.S. policies aimed at safeguarding its economy.

The report also added that the global trade landscape has also evolved since Trump's first term. Several nations are now better prepared to engage with the U.S. on trade matters. Many countries have expressed willingness to lower import duties or increase imports from the US to foster stronger economic ties.

By adopting a targeted and strategic approach, the Trump 2.0 administration could aim for greater precision in addressing critical concerns while ensuring minimal disruption to economy. *—ANI*

EVs, flex-fuel & CNG lead India's automotive launch

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The Indian automobile industry is witnessing a remarkable transformation, with electric vehicles (EVs), flex-fuel models, and CNG-powered vehicles taking center stage in recent launches.

A report by Phillip Capital highlights that these alternative fuel vehicles are rapidly reshaping both passenger and two-wheeler segments, signaling a major shift in consumer and industry preferences.

The report also stated that the recently concluded Bharat Mobility Auto OEM Expo in Delhi also showcased a significant shift in automakers' strategies, emphasizing alternative fuel vehicles.

According to the report, the automotive sector in India is poised for significant growth, driven by the rising popularity of SUVs, electric vehicles, and hybrid models. Automakers are actively planning numerous launches in these segments. *—ANI*

IPO funds would be used for debt clearance: Dr Agarwals

CHENNAI, 25 JAN

Leading eye care service provider Dr Agarwals Eye Hospital would utilize the funds raised through the forthcoming Initial Public Offering for payment of debts and to meet some general corporate purposes, official said.

The city-headquartered company, backed by Temasek Holdings and TPG is proposing to raise an aggregate of Rs 3,027.26 crore through its maiden IPO to open from 29 to 31 January at a price band of Rs 382 to Rs 402 per share.

The public issue would be a combination of a 'fresh issue' of up to Rs 300 crore and an Offer for Sale of up to 6.78 crore equity shares worth Rs 2,727.26 crore by promoters and other shareholders.

Briefing reporters here, the hospital's CEO Adil Agarwal said the aggregate size of the IPO is Rs 3,027.26 crore out of which Rs 300 crore would go into the company to reduce the debts.

"Through the proceeds from its fresh issuance to the extent of Rs 195 crore will be utilised for repayment or prepayment in part or full of certain of its borrowings, and the balance will be utilised for general corporate purposes. *—PTI*

Vision IAS fined 3L for misleading civil services exam advertisements

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a penalty of Rs 3 lakh on Vision IAS for deceptive advertising about its students' success in the civil services examination.

The authority found that Vision IAS deliberately withheld specific course information, creating a misleading impression about its success rates in such exams, a statement by Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said.

The institute's advertisement claimed "10 in Top 10 selections in CSE 2020 from various programs of Vision IAS" and prominently displayed successful candidates and pictures.

Vision IAS highlighted only the first rank student's foundation course while concealing course details of nine other successful UPSC Civil Services Exam (CSE) 2020 candidates.

Of the remaining nine successful candidates, one student took a foundation course, six of them opted for test series for preliminary and mains stage and two of them for Abhyaas test.

The institute's selective disclosure suggested all candidates followed the same course path, which was false. Courses ranged from Rs 750 for a mock test to Rs 1,40,000 for a full foundation course.

The commission imposed a penalty to protect "young and impressionable aspirants" from potentially deceptive marketing practices, the statement said.

The CCPA has so far issued 46 notices to various coaching institutes for misleading advertisements and unfair trade practice.It has imposed a penalty of Rs 74.60 lakh on 23 coaching institutes and directed them to discontinue the misleading advertisements. *—PTI*

- The institute's selective disclosure suggested all candidates followed the same course path, which was false. Courses ranged from Rs 750 for a mock test to Rs 1,40,000 for a full foundation course

MACROTECH DEVELOPERS Q3 PROFIT RISES 88%

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Realty firm Macrotech Developers on Saturday reported 88 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 944.4 crore for December quarter FY25 on higher income amid strong housing demand.

Net profit of Macrotech Developers, which sells properties under Lodha brand, stood at Rs 503.3 crore in the year-ago period.

Total income rose to Rs 4,146.6 crore in the third quarter of this fiscal from Rs 2,958.7 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding year, according to a filing.

During the April-December period of 2024-25 fiscal, the company's net profit more than doubled to Rs 1,842.6 crore from Rs 883.6 crore in the year-ago period.

Total income rose to Rs 9,749.5 crore from Rs 6,385.6 crore a year ago.

Abhishek Lodha, MD & CEO, Macrotech Developers Ltd. said, "We achieved our best ever pre-sales performance of Rs 4,510 crore." *—PTI*

SURPASSES TIM & PICHAI

Starbucks CEO earns $100M in 4 months

WASHINGTON, 25 JAN

In a year when top executives like Apple's Tim Cook and Google's Sundar Pichai each earned approximately $75 million, Starbucks' new CEO, Brian Niccol, has drawn attention with an extraordinary pay package. Niccol, who joined Starbucks in September 2024, earned nearly $100 million in just four months, making him one of the highest-paid executives in the United States.

According to a Bloomberg report, Niccol's compensation totaled $96 million for 2024, with 94 per cent of it stemming from stock awards tied to performance and vesting over a three-year period. Additionally, he received a $5 million sign-on bonus within his first month at the coffee giant.

A recent company filing dated 24 January detailed Niccol's pay structure, including over $143,000 allocated for housing expenses—nearly half of which went toward tax payments—and $72,000 spent on travel between his Southern California residence and Starbucks' Seattle headquarters.

Niccol's total compensation package, as estimated by the Bloomberg Pay Index, is valued at approximately $113 million annually. This figure includes stock awards intended to replace those forfeited when Niccol left his previous role as CEO of Chipotle.

Niccol's appointment followed the departure of former CEO Laxman Narasimhan, who faced declining sales, unionisation challenges, and global boycott calls. Niccol was chosen for his proven leadership abilities and track record of revitalising struggling businesses.

Brian Niccol PHOTO: X

Niccol's remarkable pay package has positioned him among the top 20 highest-paid CEOs in the United States, underscoring Starbucks' significant investment in leadership amid ongoing challenges and opportunities for growth. *—Agencies*

CEEW chief: AI, green tech key to sustained growth

DAVOS, 25 JAN

Arunabha Ghosh PHOTO: X

Asserting that climate change is no more just an environmental issue but a broader economic issue, CEEW chief Arunabha Ghosh has said that India must use the opportunities and challenges posed by new disruptors as levers for sustainable growth going forward.

"Whether it is artificial intelligence, quantum computing, synthetic biology and green or clean tech, these are the new disruptors and we must in a way ride this tiger," Ghosh told PTI in an interview here during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting that ended on Friday.

Ghosh said the members of the WEF are now recognising climate risks and the broader environmental risks as one of the key business and economic risks.

"Over the next ten years, five out ten risks identified are either related to climate change or biodiversity loss or extreme weather events. This demonstrates that climate change is not just an environmental agenda but a business and economy agenda," he said.

What this means for the broader business agenda is that some of the new things that need to happen, he said.

On India's climate goals and its achievements, Ghosh said India has repeatedly shown that the ambitions it has put forward are achieved. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Late goal rescues draw for 10-man Palmas in La Liga

LAS PALMAS, 25 JAN

Former Manchester United winger Adnan Januzaj scored a sensational injury-time free kick as 10-man Las Palmas came from behind to draw with Osasuna 1-1 in La Liga. Januzaj's goal in the eighth minute of added time robbed visiting Osasuna of its first league win since early November. Aimar Oroz fired home in a crowded penalty box eight minutes into the second half to give Osasuna the lead. But Januzaj, the Belgian winger on loan from Sevilla, delighted the home fans when his late free-kick took a deflection and rolled into the empty net. The comeback was all the more surprising given that Las Palmas played the last quarter of the game with 10 men after midfielder Dário Essugo was sent off. *—PTI*

Pak to host NZ, SA for ODI tri-series ahead of CT

LAHORE, 25 JAN

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday announced the schedule for the tri-nation ODI series, featuring New Zealand, South Africa, and host Pakistan ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy. "The series will be played on a single-league basis from February 8 to 14, with Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosting the opening two matches and Karachi's National Bank Stadium staging the final league match and the final," the PCB said in a statement. Pakistan and New Zealand will kick off the series at the iconic Gaddafi Stadium on 8 February.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Walker joins AC Milan from Man City on loan deal

LONDON, 25 JAN

England right-back Kyle Walker has completed a loan move to AC Milan from Manchester City, the clubs announced on Friday. The 34-year-old Walker will join Milan for the remainder of the season in a deal that could become permanent in the summer. Walker endured a difficult campaign as City captain and had not started a game since their derby loss to Manchester United on December 15. He ends his long association with City, whom he joined from Tottenham in 2017, after winning six Premier League titles and the 2023 Champions League under Pep Guardiola. "Manchester City... where do I start? Signing for this incredible club in 2017 was a dream come true," Walker wrote on social media.*—PTI*

Bengaluru jawans dominate World Pickleball league

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

The Bengaluru Jawans secured a commanding 5-0 victory against the Chennai Super Champs in their World Pickleball League debut, held at CCI-Brabourne Stadium. While the scoreline suggests a one-sided affair, Chennai showcased resilience, challenging Bengaluru at crucial points and thrilling fans with moments of exceptional play. Jack Foster's nail-biting 15-14 win over Edward Perez set the winning tone. This was followed by a formidable 15-6 women's doubles triumph. The Jardim brothers won the men's doubles 12-9, and Katerina Stewart, along with the mixed doubles team of Foster and Huynh-McClain, ensured the clean sweep on Friday.*—PTI*

K'taka crush Punjab by inning and 207 runs

Jammu & Kashmir shock star-studded Mumbai by five wickets in Ranji Trophy

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

Punjab skipper and opener Shubman Gill (102) struck a classy century but failed to save his team from an innings defeat to Karnataka in their Ranji Trophy Group C match here Saturday.

Gill added 95 runs on the third day to his overnight 7 to score 102 from 171 balls from which he struck 14 fours and three sixes. He scored his first fifty off 119 balls and the next 50 runs came in just 40 balls.

He was the eighth batsman dismissed in the Punjab second essay after they conceded a huge 420-run lead in the first innings.

Punjab had scored a paltry 55 in their first innings with Gill contributing just four runs. They were 24 for 2 in 13 overs in their second innings at stumps on the second day Friday. In the end, Punjab were shot out for 213 in 63.4 overs in their second innings to lose by an innings and 207 runs.

Karnataka crushed Punjab by an inning and 207 runs despite Gill's fighting century *PHOTO: PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir's players celebrate after winning the Ranji Trophy match against Mumbai, in Mumbai on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Karnataka, who had made 475 in 122.1 overs in their first innings with Ravichandran Smaran (203) scoring his maiden first-class double hundred, collected seven points, including a bonus point for an innings win.

Pacer Yashovardhan Parantap and leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal took three wickets each for Karnataka during Punjab's second innings.

Gill had failed to impress in the recent five-match Test series in Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The 25-year-old right-hander was unable to put up any significant contribution.

He played in five innings in three Tests, scoring just 93 runs with a highest score of 31 at an average of 18.60. He was dropped for the fourth Test but came back in the fifth and last game as captain Rohit Sharma sat himself out. But Gill could just 20 and 13 in the last Test.

Unfancied **Jammu and Kashmir** continued their glorious run in the ongoing Ranji Trophy, beating star-studded defending champions Mumbai by five wickets in a group A league match to almost confirm their knock-out berth. It was after a decade that Jammu and Kashmir beat the 42-time champions, having last won in December 2014 at the Wankhede Stadium.

It wasn't a mean achievement with the Mumbai squad comprising of India Test and ODI skipper Rohit Sharma, former captain and 80 plus Test match veteran Ajinkya Rahane, ODI regular and IPL winning skipper Shreyas Iyer, star opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, seasoned all-rounder Shardul Thakur and off-spinner Tanush Kotian, who was a part of Border-Gavaskar squad.

Rohit's return to the Ranji Trophy after a decade yielded only 31 runs across two knocks and he looked very much out of form, shaky and not ready to grind it out for long hours.

J&K now have 29 points from six games and lead group A with a match left against Baroda where they need to get just one point.

Baroda (27 from 5 games) is currently playing Maharashtra. If Baroda gets a first-innings lead against J&K in their last game, Mumbai (22 from 6 games) would be knocked out of the group league phase even if they win with bonus points versus Meghalaya.

On the day, needing 205 to win, opener Shubham Khajuria (45) and one-down Vivrant Sharma (38) laid the foundation with a 75-run stand for the second wicket. *—PTI*

Rohit Sharma named captain of ICC's T20 all-star XI

DUBAI, 25 JAN

Rohit Sharma was on Saturday named captain of the ICC's T20 International Team of the Year 2024, which was predominantly Indian in its composition thanks to the side's memorable World Cup triumph in the format.

The other Indian members of the all-star XI were pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who also featured in the ICC's Test Team of the Year, all-rounder Hardik Pandya and left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh.

The standout performers from other nations to make the line-up were Australian marauder Travis Head, England's Phil Salt, Pakistan's Babar Azam, West Indies' Nicholas Pooran, Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza, Afghanistan's Rashid Khan, and Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga.

Rohit the Test captain and Test batter has been under considerable pressure in the past few months owing to a series of debacles for the team as well as him personally. But the 37-year-old's credentials in the shorter formats remain strong. In T20 Internationals, Rohit had an unforgettable 2024, both as a leader and a batter. The seasoned opener amassed 378 runs in 11 matches at an impressive average of 42.00 and a strike rate of over 160.

Rohit Sharma *PHOTO: PTI*

Rohit played a pivotal role in India's triumphant T20 World Cup campaign in the USA and West Indies, with three half-centuries, including a sensational 92 against Australia in the Super Eight stage.

Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh (all Indians); Travis Head (Australia); Phil Salt (England); Babar Azam (Pakistan); Nicholas Pooran (wk; West Indies); Sikandar Raza (Zimbabwe); Rashid Khan (Afghanistan) and Wanindu Hasaranga (Sri Lanka). *—PTI*

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sinner plays Alexander Zverev in the men's final

MELBOURNE, 25 JAN

It's not often that a man can follow up his first Grand Slam title by repeating as the champion at the same tournament a year later, which is what Jannik Sinner will be trying to do Sunday when he faces Alexander Zverev in the Australian Open final.

The last time it happened was nearly 20 years ago: Rafael Nadal accomplished that sort of repeat at the 2005 and 2006 French Opens. He turned out OK.

For the No. 1-ranked Sinner, the past year also included the doping case that is still unresolved. He tested positive for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid twice in March, which didn't become public until his exoneration was announced shortly before the start of play at the U.S. Open which he won. There is a hearing in the World Anti-Doping Agency's appeal scheduled in April.

"There's been a lot of pressure around him for the last nine months now, since April last year. He deals with it as well as anybody that I've ever seen deal with pressure," Cahill said. "He's an amazing young man who's been able to put that to one side. ... He has a clear conscience."

"Back of my head, I also know that I'm 23 years old, and I am not perfect, no? I know that I have things still to improve. I have certain areas where I can get better. That's why we work," Sinner said. "Every day is a big challenge. Every day you have a different opponent. You try to understand what's happening.

play is scheduled to start at 7:30 p.m. local time (3:30 a.m. EST) on Sunday.

Dutch player Sam Schroder wins 4th straight quad wheelchair title

Sam Schroder has won his fourth consecutive quad wheelchair title at the Australian Open after defeating fellow Dutchman Niels Vink 7-6 (7), 7-5.

Second-ranked Vink went into the match with a 23-12 won-lost record against the top-ranked Schroder. "I think it's for me to once again have won a tournament," Schroder said. "After the first one, you want the second one. Unbelievable to have won the fourth one. It's crazy when I think about it." *—PTI*

Federer and Wawrinka inspire AO junior champion

MELBOURNE, 25 JAN

Swiss player Henry Bernet gave himself a fairly impressive 18th birthday present Saturday and said he'd taken inspiration from countrymen Roger Federer and Stan Wawrinka following his 6-3, 6-4 win over American Benjamin Willwerth in the Australian Open junior boys final.

Bernet said he met Federer for the first time last year at the U.S. Open while he practiced with Wawrinka as the pair share the same management team. Bernet recently announced he had recruited Severin Luthi, the long-time coach Federer, ending his partnership with current coach Kai Stentenbach. *—PTI*

Gukesh holds Abdusattorov; Praggnanandhaa stays in lead

WIJK AAN ZEE , 6 JUNE

World champion D Gukesh played out a draw with overnight joint leader Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, while R Praggnanandhaa signed peace with defending champion Wei Yi of China in the sixth round of the Tata Steel chess tournament here.

With only one decisive game in the 14-player round-robin tournament at the De Morian on Friday, Abdusattorov and Praggnanandhaa continued to share the lead on 4.5 points out of a possible six and Gukesh is right on the toes of the leaders with four points.

Seven rounds are still left in the first major tournament of the year. P Harikrishna, Alexey Sarana of Serbia, and Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia share the fourth spot on 3.5 points each and are within striking distance of the leaders. Gukesh held his ground in a challenging endgame against Abdusattorov, escaping with a draw after 64 moves. The game began with the Italian Opening, leading to an equal middle game. However, as complications arose, Abdusattorov seized a persistent advantage and handled the position skillfully. In the endgame, Gukesh was forced to concede a pawn, and the situation worsened when Abdusattorov sacrificed his knight for three pawns, putting the Indian under significant pressure. Despite being in a difficult position, Gukesh once again showcased his defensive resilience, capitalising on an inaccuracy by his opponent to salvage a hard-fought draw. Praggnanandhaa tried to make a foray with white pieces against Wei Yi out of a Ruy Lopez opening. *—PTI*

Sandhu, Chawrasia and Rashid make cut in Manila

DUBAI, 25 JAN

Ajeetesh Sandhu was the best of the three Indians to make the cut at the USD 500,000 Smart Infinity Philippine Open golf tournament, the season-opening event of the 2025 Asian Tour in Manila on Saturday.

Sandhu added 71 to his first two rounds of 67-70 to reach 2-under for 54 holes and was Tied-26th.The other two Indians making the cut were SSP Chawrasia (69-73-67) at 1-under and was T-37, while Rashid Khan (70-72-69) was 1-over and T-49.Sandhu dropped a bogey on the first hole but birdied the fifth and the seventh.

There was another setback with a double bogey on Par-4 11th, and he then he birdied the 14th.However he gave that shot back on the very next hole.Yuvraj Sandhu and Rahil Gangjee had earlier missed the cut.Japan's Tomoya Ikemura fired his third straight round in the 60s to get to 8-under and one shot ahead of Sadom Kaewkanjana (65-66-72) at 7-under.Sadom birdied two of his last three holes to extend his 36-hole lead to three shots at the halfway stage but dropped five shots between the fifth and the ninth on the front nine in the third round. Five players Bjorn Hellgren, Julien Sale, Xiao Bowen, Kevin Yuan and Danthai Boonma share the third place at 6-under.India's **Veer Ahlawat** made his first cut on the DP World Tour after carding a fine three-under 69 in the second round of Ras Al Khaimah Championship.He chose to focus on the PGTI and earned a passage into the bigger Tour. Ahlawat dropped a shot early in the second round, but picked four birdies after that for a 69. He birdied the third seventh, eighth and the 15th. *—PTI*

TELANGANA LEAD ITBP TAME ARMY IN ICE-HOCKEY

LEH, 25 JAN

Pranav Madav Surapaneni won Telangana's second gold in the Khelo India Winter Games' ice-skating competition but all attention on Saturday was on the blockbuster ice-hockey league match between Indian Army and ITBP in which the latter prevailed.

With about 10 minutes left on the clock, Stanzin Mingure scored twice in succession to script a dramatic 3-1 victory for ITBP as Army's defense collapsed in the third and final period of the contest.

On the day all roads led to the 5000-capacity NDS sports complex for the Army versus ITBP ice hockey match. But it was Mohammed Ismail who struck first blood for ITBP in the second minute of a match that often got a bit physical.

Tsewang Dorjey drew level for Army with a lovely flick at the far post early in the second period. *—PTI*

WARM WELCOME

Athletes start arriving for 38th National Games

HALDWANI, 25 JAN

The much-anticipated 38th National Games are set to commence on January 28, and the arrival of athletes has officially begun. With an estimated participation of over 10,000 athletes from across the country, Uttarakhand is abuzz with excitement as preparations reach their final stages.

The Triathlon competition will kickstart the games in Haldwani on January 26, with participants traveling from various states to take part in the event. The first batch of athletes arrived in Haldwani on Saturday.

Sports Minister, Rekha Arya, personally welcomed the athletes and expressed her best wishes. "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the teams from various states that have arrived in the land of Uttarakhand to participate in the 38th National Games. On behalf of the people of Devbhoomi, I wish all athletes the very best for their performances. I have already instructed the local officials to make the necessary arrangements for the welcome, transportation, accommodation, and food for the teams arriving in Haldwani from other states. In the coming days, thousands more athletes will arrive in Uttarakhand for the remaining events," she said.

Athletes begin arriving for the 38th National Games, greeted with warm welcome *PHOTO: @NATIONAL GAMES*

The enthusiasm surrounding the National Games is palpable, both among the state government and the local populace. The competitions will be hosted in multiple cities, including Haldwani, Dehradun, Rishikesh, Haridwar, and Rudrapur, among others. The grand opening ceremony of the 38th National Games will take place on 28 January. *—PTI*

Pak throw away advantage despite Ali's hattrick

KARACHI, 25 JAN

Head coach Aaqib Javed promised that Pakistan could prepare a spin-friendly wicket anywhere in the country, and the first day of the second Test against West Indies in Multan demonstrated he had kept his promise. Spin ran riot once more, as 20 wickets fell and both sides wrapped up within nine runs of each other. A hat-trick from Noman Ali, the first by a Pakistani spinner in Tests, saw Pakistan tear through the visitors in the morning session. West Indies were reduced to 54 for 8 at one stage before a remarkable recovery from the last three batters dragged them to the relative safety of 163. It became clear that two of them could play the spin game when West Indies got the ball in hand. Kemar Roach ripped through Pakistan's top order, while Jomel Warrican and Gudakesh Motie split seven wickets between them. Only Mohammad Rizwan and Saud Shakeel offered resistance as Pakistan folded for 154. West Indies 163 (Motie 55, Warrican 36*, Noman 6-41) lead Pakistan 154 (Rizwan 49, Warrican 4-43, Motie 3-49) by nine runs *—PTI*

Noman Ali